Christian Faith and the Campus Mind

HARLAND E. HOGUE

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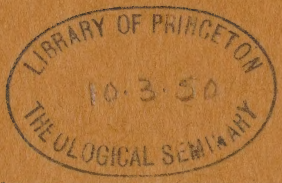
1949



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OCT 3 1950
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CHRISTIAN FAITH *and the Campus Mind*

by

HARLAND E. HOGUE

ABINGDON-COKESBURY PRESS
New York • *Nashville*

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE CAMPUS MIND

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SET UP, PRINTED, AND BOUND BY THE
PARTHENON PRESS, AT NASHVILLE,
TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

MARY LOUISE

Preface

PAUL J. BRAISTED in *Religion in Higher Education* has observed that "if either religion or education is to fulfill its high mission in society, they must recognize their need of one another and join forces in common endeavor." One of the heartening signs at the moment is the increasing number who share Mr. Braisted's conviction. But to share it complacently is obviously not enough.

There are still universities which

boast of little more than a yell and a debt. . . . Our students come for the most part from families in . . . one class, the oneness of which is made evident by the fact that its members dress alike, vote alike—depending on whether they come from north or south of the Mason-Dixon Line—and think alike, if the acceptance of a tradition can be called thinking. A university so circumstanced cannot be tempted to play an ancillary role; it will serve its class as a slave a master; the training one gets in it will help him to make and keep his place in his class, the studies he pursues make him socially acceptable to others of his class, both of his own sex and the opposite, and, finally, give him a degree which is essentially a pedigree of class. But as a graduate he will go back to his home town to read the same papers, play golf with the same crowd, and be ridden with the same prejudices that he had before he entered the university.[1]

[1] Douglas Horton, *The Idea of a Christian University,* a sermon delivered at the University of Chicago chapel, January 26, 1947.

There is still much religion which has zeal, but not according to knowledge. Our Christian faith, on the other hand, is affected by naturalism in our faculties, by secularism in community attitudes, and by the general impoverishment of life through an overemphasis on the contemporary. "To know one's age," said Sir Richard Livingstone, "and nothing else, is useless. We must be able to criticize and judge it. . . . Otherwise we risk being captives of our own day and slaves to its attendant delusions." [2]

I am convinced that much of the pathos of some forms of present-day Christianity is the direct result of its being cut off from its biblical heritage. It is my thesis that such a bifurcation of our culture must be remedied. To that end religion and education share a common responsibility.

For a man of courage to lay hold of an idea and to follow it relentlessly to its conclusion is a great accomplishment. Galileo, Newton, and Einstein are in this respect a part of the glory of man's estate. But to be laid hold of by an experience of God, so compelling in its uniqueness, so genuine in its expression, and so authentic in its influence that such life becomes the light of men, is a still greater experience.

When the invitation came during the winter of 1947-48 to give a series of addresses at two college summer conferences sponsored by the Methodist Student Movement, Department of Student Work, Board of Education of The Methodist Church, I gladly accepted. I was spending a year on leave of absence from Scripps College, doing post-

[2] *Time*, April 11, 1949, p. 30.

graduate study in Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, and the following chapters grew out of my reflections of that year. At Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, and Pemberton, New Jersey, where the lectures were first delivered, I was especially indebted to Harold Ehrensperger, editor of *motive,* who was most constructive in his suggestions, and to H. D. Bollinger, secretary of the Student Department of the Board of Education, who first proposed that these words might be useful in printed form. After revision the lectures were repeated at the University of Oregon and at Occidental College during the fall of 1948 at religious-emphasis-week programs.

I am grateful for the frank and helpful criticisms of numerous colleagues and students on several campuses with whom I have had the opportunity of discussion—some of it in the fruitful hours of the early morning! Miss Ruth George, associate professor emerita of English at Scripps College, has been generous editor, friend, and critic. Mary Louise Hogue, comrade in things of the mind and of the Spirit, has been of indispensable help in preparing the manuscript.

HARLAND E. HOGUE

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CHAPTER

I

THE AGE OF FAITH TO THE AGE OF ANXIETY

LIVING ON A CAMPUS in this our own day, not long after World War II, can be a shattering experience. The memory is full of horrors. Our tomorrows are neither secure nor promising. Our new and overwhelming responsibility was set down by an American soldier shortly before his death:

> For now, you who live and breathe
> Must do a harder thing than dying is:
> For you must think,
> And ghosts will drive you on.

What are these ghosts that drive us on? Fear of cultural collapse? A dread of an economic determinism harnessed to the ruthless political power of thirteen men in the Kremlin? Our own spiritual ineptness? Or are we possessed by a commitment reaching back to the Age of Faith?

SYNTHESIS

If we had been walking the streets of Paris on a pleasant spring day in 1269, we should have found our-

selves inevitably drawn toward the university. A Dominican monk from Italy, a pupil of Albertus Magnus long refused academic recognition, was to lecture. A man of simple habits, he was widely known for his intellectual profundity, the logical coherence of his thought, and the breadth of his academic interests. Consulted on imperative political and social questions, he was stealing away every moment possible to work upon his magnum opus, the *Summa Theologica.* An enthusiastic throng greeted this professor of theology, still in his early forties and already the acknowledged synthesizer of medieval Europe—Thomas Aquinas.

The time of Aquinas began the only sustained period in our Western background in which the theological, philosophical, scientific, and political ideals of man have been united and held together in a logical system. In philosophy Aquinas followed Aristotle rather than Augustine and Plato. Reason was extolled. Reconciling his thought with neo-Platonism, this father of the Church saw "divine knowledge" made universal through a Holy Roman Empire, where the emperor, under the pope, might express the spiritual in the material. All religious thought centered in the desire for a knowledge of God, of man's origin, and of his destiny. Reason was always held subservient but not contrary to revelation, and through the former one might obtain the latter. The study of Scripture was urged but as interpreted by the Church. Social ideals springing from this way of thought saw all of life a hierarchy of loyalties. Each man was commissioned to play his part—whether king, bishop, noble, squire, or peasant. Since God

was the first cause, man's place was determined for him, and he was to keep it: the Jew to remain in his ghetto, the Christian to refrain from accepting interest on money loaned, woman to be subservient to her husband, peasant to his lord. In this "bandbox theory of the universe," held together by a Church which completely dominated the thought and activity of society, there was the strength of solidarity and the tragedy of a vast totalitarian ecclesiastical system. Dante glorified it in *The Divine Comedy;* Calvin attacked it in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion;* Sir Walter Scott centuries later romanticized it in *Ivanhoe.* For three hundred years the ideas of Aquinas were to create, sustain, and nourish the culture of Western civilization.

To be sure, this synthesis was not without critics. The Cathari had protested the iniquities of the clergy; the Waldenses had personalized an asceticism which circumvented instead of attacked the machinery of salvation in the Church. These movements were but annoying flies upon the back of a powerful organism which had the one essential to rule—possession of power. It had not yet heard, through John Acton, that all power was corrupting, and absolute power absolutely corrupting. Aquinas saw the soul as a unity. Since mind and will were joined by God, man should not attempt to put them asunder. Grace —unearned forgiveness—could not be won by man; it could be granted him only through the sacraments of the Church. The conferring of merit was made valid in the act itself. Without priestly pardon there was no salvation.

REBIRTH

Partly through the Crusades, partly through the conquest of the Eastern empire—vastly superior in culture to the West—and partly through new intellectual and political movements in the West itself, there burst upon the nations of Europe the fresh new draft of air we call the Renaissance. Florence, that jewel of Italian grace, flowered in art, sculpture, and literature. The Medici, for all their political chicanery and moral obloquy, surrounded themselves by those who had beauty to express and who radiantly portrayed it. Twelve universities were established across Europe from 1409 to 1506. Printing was invented; and the new learning from the Arabs—a revival of the Greek heritage from Aristotle—now reached the educated if not the masses. Great humanistic scholars like Reuchlin and Erasmus were the darlings of European monarchs. Theology lost its hold, for it was discredited by nominalism, that anti-Platonic rejection of the doctrine of universal essences in reality; it was despised by humanism; it was supplanted by mysticism, with its stress upon the complete inwardness of spiritual life as opposed to the vast ecclesiastical structure of an externalized Christianity.

But the Church was not without the pure in heart. Francis of Assisi and Dominic reflected exalted motives and a winsome selflessness, though in different ways. Less personable, but a prodigious force for moral reform, was a Dominican monk in Florence—Savonarola. His preaching had zeal but, like that of some members of the United States Senate, it was not always according to diplomacy.

His enemies plotted; his friends proved fickle; and on May 23, 1498, he was burned. Before the monk stepped into the flames, the bishop, in the presence of the crowd and by order of the pope, said: "Savonarola, I excommunicate you from the church militant, and from the church triumphant." To which that austere man replied: "From the church militant, 'yes,' from the church triumphant, *'no,'* for that is not within your power." [1]

REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation had three emphases. The first originated in Germany when the son of a peasant miner became one of the few men of whom it may be accurately said changed the direction of Western thought. Martin Luther, a buoyant, music-loving extrovert, possessed of a deep sense of moral unworthiness, entered an Augustinian monastery, where he showed marked ability as a lecturer on the New Testament. Influenced in philosophy by Occam and beginning to distrust reason, he inevitably came to oppose Aquinas and Aristotle. In reading Paul he became convinced that a Christian was primarily a new moral being by virtue of the fact that he was a forgiven sinner. Salvation was a right and personal relationship to God, needing no intermediary.

One does not expect college professors, then or now, to create revolutions. At Wittenberg, however, that happened. Lecturing on Psalms and the letters to the Galatians, the Hebrews, and Titus, Luther was gripped with the intensity of this profound conviction: Christians are justi-

[1] From a radio sermon by Harry Emerson Fosdick.

fied by faith! What brought so great a matter to a crisis was a relatively minor incident. The practice of indulgences had been recognized in the Church for years. Christ and the apostles were thought to have stored up merit for the use of sinful men who had special need of such spiritual treasure. Popes and bishops had the right, under certain conditions, to grant an indulgence, for which a fee was required. Pope Leo X in the sixteenth century was in need of funds for constructing St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. Tetzel, a Dominican monk none too scrupulous in motive, entered Germany advocating large gifts to the Church for the sake of these indulgences. The moment had struck for Luther. His belief in the immediacy of the relationship between God and man provoked him to action. He posted ninety-five theses on the door of the college chapel, a routine challenge for a university debate. But to his surprise and to the consternation of his friends, his theses were copied, printed, and circulated throughout Europe.

The priesthood of all believers was authentic, said Luther, without Church or pope or priest; the center of authority was transferred from an ecclesiastical system to the Bible; an emphasis was made upon the dignity and value of the Christian vocation, so that a scrub woman doing her labor as unto the Lord might be of more significance than a monk wrestling through the night in prayer. Here were ideas coming out of authentic spiritual experience which broke the back of the neat, well-ordered world of Aquinas.

In Switzerland an ascetic French humanist and lawyer fled from the Church. Drawn from his retreat at Basel,

where at twenty-six he produced the first draft of his *Institutes,* John Calvin was impelled by the reformer Guillaume Farel to aid his cause in that rising financial center of Geneva. Luther was a peasant, Calvin a man of the city; the former was friendly, outgoing, emotional, practical; the latter was withdrawn, antisocial, ascetic. Pondering deeply upon the Bible, Calvin felt the overwhelming sovereignty of God. So transcendent was this Deity that all men before birth had been elected to salvation or condemned to eternal damnation without their knowledge and without respect to their lives on earth. How did one know in which destiny his future was cast? He did not. One hoped therefore he was saved; yet he lived scrupulously under a self-imposed discipline, lest he become eternally lost. This discipline glorified the business virtues: frugality, austerity, using interest on money loaned, honesty, and personal integrity. Unconsciously here was a gospel for Main Street. Calvin sought to make of all Europe a gigantic monastery where the Law of God, as he strictly interpreted it, should be observed. Under the influence of this Puritanism, however, the Calvinist began to grow rich. And, as Max Weber [2] and Richard Tawney [3] sagely observe, Calvinism, which sought to sanctify the businessman's virtues, could have a tendency toward glorifying his vices.

The radical left wing of the Reformation was made

[2] *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930).

[3] *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926).

up of the Anabaptists. Their name meaning "rebaptists," was a word of derision given them by their enemies because they refused the sacrament of baptism to children. Luther and Calvin sought to reform the earthly Church; the radicals to destroy it. The former, especially Calvin, urged the Church to redeem the political order; the latter felt the political order to be hopelessly degenerate and would have no part in it. As a result of this perfectionism the Anabaptists would not vote, refused to pay taxes, would not hold public office, and refused to fight in any army. Since they regarded all earthly church groups as secular and unworthy, they sought to found a new church based upon the communal life of the New Testament. Moravians, Mennonites, Quakers, and Pietists all stem from these remarkably brave but persecuted people. Especially in Holland, where they were placed in boxes too small for them and their bodies were stamped on until dead, they endured unspeakable treatment. In Germany, France, and England they were hunted down with equal vehemence by Catholics and Protestants and were drowned, hanged, or burned over slow fire.

REVOLUTION

In the precise, rigid system of Aquinas, God was in his heaven, man was on earth, and all was well. For it was a small earth and a comfortable heaven. The earth was, of course, the center of the cosmos, with the sun and stars moving about it in respectful fashion according to the Ptolemaic system. Then came the "new look" in astronomy! Copernicus, through careful mathematical measure-

ment, became convinced that the intellectual gears of man needed shifting. The sun did not revolve about the earth, but the earth about the sun. And the earth was but a tiny fragment of a universe of vast dimensions. What this change of view did to the vanity of the earth was incredible, but what it did to the vanity of man is indescribable. The heretofore proud man was now reduced to "a tiny speck on a third-rate planet revolving about a tenth-rate sun drifting in an endless cosmic ocean." [4] This extending of the boundaries of the universe jeopardized the old authorities. Even observation and common sense were fallible. Only reason, operating with mathematical precision, could be trusted. This understanding made it necessary for man to amass a wealth of accurate observations upon which to work. But where was there a place for revelation in such a world?

When these overwhelming suggestions were caught and amplified by Kepler and then given more precise direction by Galileo, the Church became alarmed at the disturbance of its spiritual status quo. When Galileo broke completely with the Aristotelian distinction between the earth and heaven and furnished experimental confirmation of the Copernican theory, he was ordered before the Inquisition. Although because of his friendship with the pope he was not formally imprisoned, he was threatened with torture, ordered to recite seven penitential psalms seven times a day for seven years, relieved of his university professorship, and banished to his country home

[4] John H. Randall, Jr., *Making of the Modern Mind* (rev. ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), p. 226. Used by permission.

in 1633. His books were not released from their official ban by the Roman Catholic Church until 1835.

While such changes were taking place in science, no less a revolution was occurring in philosophy. Descartes, a mathematician, went to bed one day with a cold and, unlike most professors, got up with a new idea! He had been visited in his illness by the angel of truth. He had determined upon a ruthless adherence to reason. Beginning with doubt, he used the premise: "I think, therefore I am." He appealed to the Augustinian method of self-examination. He placed reason above authority and would accept only that knowledge which his mind could fully understand.

The implications of the Cartesian revolution cannot be exaggerated. The whole world had its center of gravity changed from a spiritual organism to a physical, quantitative, mathematical order. In consequence, nature was not so much the glory of God as a machine—systematic, predictable, but nevertheless a machine: more like an automobile than a philosophical poem by T. S. Eliot! Man, as a consequence, was matter of physical and chemical change; the soul was a part of a mechanical order. Man was alone in a vast complex system. A devout Catholic, Descartes did not dream he was disturbing faith. God was the continuous creator; by intuition and deduction men could understand his will. But man wanted certitude; he was looking for ultimate standards; and the way to truth was not by the road of faith but by the road of reason.

A young Jew who began to think too much was cast

out of home and synagogue. Those who suffer much become either very bitter or very gentle, and Spinoza passed his days in "peace, serenity, and joy." He supported himself by grinding lenses, and in loneliness he thought his thoughts. Descartes' ideas fell on fertile ground, and Spinoza went beyond him to assume the power of mechanical law and to see the entire universe as the reign of inexorable principles. God and nature were one. Such pantheism, while differing from that of the Hindu Vedanta and the New England Transcendentalists, saw the Divine in every flower, tree, and living thing. When the stupid Louis XIV told Spinoza that if he would but dedicate one book to him, he would pension him for life, Spinoza answered that his soul was not for sale and went back to grinding lenses. "If Napoleon had been as intelligent as Spinoza," wrote Anatole France, "he would have lived in a garret and written four books." [5]

Copernicus had an "intellectual son" in England who woke up the whole of science one fine day by letting an apple fall upon his head. Isaac Newton became the prophet of the science of nature, as his contemporary John Locke became the prophet of the science of human nature. By the age of twenty-five Newton had made his most significant discoveries, although his *Principia Mathematica* took some additional proofreading before it was published. In describing gravitation he stressed the mathematical method. He applied this method universally. All the universe was the product of natural law. A devout man, a

[5] *M. Bergeret in Paris,* tr. B. Drillien (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1921), p. 180.

deist, he felt the implication of this idea awesome. Not even Calvin, with his sovereignty of God, had reduced man to such pygmy status. For if the universe were so vast, why should a God of the immensities concern himself with this fragment of measurable protoplasm?

John Locke, the father of modern political science, the source of much of Jefferson's idealism in the Declaration of Independence, with Newton a deeply religious man, found God demonstrated by cause and effect. Reason was the avenue to truth; therefore all Christianity must be reasonable. As the great apostle of toleration Locke turned to man's divinity as the source of man's rights. These rights were natural rights, inalienable rights, and they included for him the right of revolution. These ideas of the Enlightenment thus became basic for younger contemporaries like Voltaire and Thomas Paine in France, and Jefferson and Franklin in America.

What Newton and Locke and the Enlightenment voiced in the worship of the perfection of nature had no more popular advocate than Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man*:

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

PROTEST AND PROGRESS

In the world of thought, as in the world of physical science, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The Age of Reason had had its day and scored a couple of home runs. It was inevitable that the opposition would seek a strike-out. Immanuel Kant, the son of a Pietist mother, raised his clear and determined voice in his *Critique of Pure Reason* to suggest that there is more in the world of experience than is found within the cerebellum. Knowledge is the product of two elements: (1) a content from without, (2) a form instilled by the laws of the mind. These two elements give us experience. But this experience is not of what things are in themselves; it is only of what our minds make of what has come from without. The natural religion of Newton therefore is intellectually impossible. But what is possible is a feeling of moral obligation, a "categorical imperative." It is so to act that the principles of action may become those of universal law. There are three positive convictions: (1) If man ought to do his duty, he can. (2) Immortality is necessary, for life must be long enough for man to do his duty. (3) God is certain, not by the "hypothesis of pure reason," but in the conviction of practical reason.

Romanticism as feeling and experience was found in Rousseau, Hobbes, Goethe, and Hume. In Hume's words: "Man can explain nothing; he can only observe and depict." The great romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats gave wings to this philosophy:

> And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.[6]

This release of disciplined emotion produced a Schleiermacher in theology, and on the Continent and in England a profoundly influential Pietism, eventuating both in personal heart-religion and also in an aggressive humanitarianism. Spener and Zinzendorf in Germany and the Wesleys and Whitefield in England and America brought healthy-mindedness into a Church which had grown intellectually lazy and morally decadent. To Hegel the universe was a constant development of the Absolute through struggle and effort. God was always striving to reveal himself in three stages: (1) thesis, movement in direction; (2) antithesis, limitation or opposition; and synthesis, (3) the union of the two.

In 1859 a book was published which, even within our lifetime, has been banned by Boston, burned by the children of light, and can still cause rising blood pressures within certain well-meaning religious groups. Charles Darwin, a reverent agnostic, wrote *The Origin of Species* and followed it with *The Descent of Man.*

[6] Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey."

In one respect the obscurantist viewpoint against Darwin's very sincere work is lamentable. But men were not wrong in believing that Darwin's findings, discredited as many of them now are, would cause incalculable changes in education. Many scholars believe his concepts the most revolutionary of the last one hundred years. His theory advanced the causal explanation of process. Following Malthus in his cynical analysis of the necessity for wars to do away with surplus populations, Darwin showed that only the most favored of the species survive. He encouraged patient, tireless search for an infinity of truth from our biological experience. He emphasized the complexity of organization in beliefs and society, which Marx later magnified. He gave to Western thought a new scale of values. For if the eighteenth century believed in what was rational, useful, and natural, the twentieth century—following his thesis that society is steadily moving from lower to higher forms—believes, therefore, in the most recent development as that of most value. Put bluntly, this implies that the book of the month is inevitably the book of the century! Darwin was humanistic and naturalistic in attitude. Yet his viewpoint paradoxically reinforced the very irrationalisms which he sought to combat. For if beliefs are means of adaptation to environment, what then becomes of truth itself? Is the scientist doing the adapting uninfluenced by his environment?

Out of its many cataclysmic effects upon our own culture, Darwin's thesis has been most real to us through the ideas of two men: Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx. These have been the high priests of widely differing classes of

modern liberals who believed unblushingly in human perfectibility. H. G. Wells in his *Outline of History,* put it all down from the amoeba to the League of Nations and saw the latter as the crowning summit of man's achievement. Tennyson voiced the aspirations of all such uncritical optimisms from Gladstone to Coué by singing of:

> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves.[7]

Spencer, however, saw society organized upon free competition and *laissez-faire* individual initiative. To him evolution meant that the whole process of the universe is working to achieve just such a society. Marx read the story quite differently. A secularized Jew, whose system has cynically been called "the conjugation of the verb 'to eat,'" Marx approached European life through the sensitive but jaundiced eyes of an economic radical who bled inwardly over the ghastly social dislocations of his time. Following Hegel, he saw society evolving, not toward individualism, but toward collectivism. The stars in their courses were fighting against capitalism, until the great day when the workers of the world should unite, capture the instruments of production, and administer them for the proletariat. Spencer and Marx, diametrically opposite to each other though they were, both read history as eventuating in a society not bad but good. Their faith led not to despair but to hope.

[7] From *In Memoriam.*

THE AGE OF ANXIETY

1. *Science.* Though Darwin was tremendously influential in the last century, his early conclusions were based upon evidence too limited to be permanently accepted. His method of experimental investigation, however, remains a creative contribution. His insistence upon inductive reason and the abolition of naïve generalizations and the deductive process remains a tribute to his fidelity to the scientific discipline.

Anthropology and psychology, two children of eighteenth-century science now claiming graduation from adolescence but not quite accepted by all members of the academic family, were slow to adopt his method. They held to deductive methods long after the intellectual curfew had sounded. As a result, experimental psychology began only with William James at Harvard. Profoundly arresting theses such as those of Freud and Abram Kardiner allege that the whole meaning of experience can be interpreted through the frustration of basic instincts, the most important being that of sex. Then there is the more temperate suggestion of Jung that there are three basic drives to be thus understood. These theories may have merit. But the Gestalt school is most true to Darwin's method in asserting the *part* is not the *whole*, and in demanding an understanding of entirety of reality before claiming certainty.

Anthropology has been afflicted with the same academic disease. Pioneers like James Frazer, who so "delightfully purveys third-hand misinformation" about the non-

Christian world, in his *Golden Bough,* made gigantic claims from a very small area of investigation. Émile Durkheim, E. B. Tyler, and Lewis H. Morgan were all guilty of the same questionable arrogance. The late Franz Boaz, the late Ruth Benedict, and Ralph Linton represent a new group beginning from scratch, who are slowly building up a growing body of responsible knowledge from which, perhaps a century hence, valuable conclusions may be drawn.

The anxiety over this crisis in science has nowhere been more succinctly put than by a contemporary philosopher:

> This . . . may be somewhat explained if we realize that scientists . . . [are] attempting to discover a kind of knowledge which their very methods [make] impossible for them to arrive at: by modern scientific methods of investigation they [are] trying to reach an absolute system of truth quite independent of any limitations of the mental powers of the essentially imperfect and biological creature that man seems to be. In a word, they [are] trying to arrive at that complete and perfect understanding and explanation of the universe that only a God could possess, by the methods possible for a being who is not a God but a rational animal.[8]

2. *Philosophy.* A wide range of philosophic reaction has come, indicating how completely the "bandbox theory of Aquinas" has been broken. There is the skepticism of the early part of *In Memoriam,* or of Thomas Hardy, or of James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night.* There is the Promethean defiance of those like Ernest Renan, Walter Pater, or George Santayana. The last, in Epicurean man-

[8] Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind,* p. 267. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers.

ner, pictures the whole agony of man's struggle as of no more consequence than a play being watched by an insensitive rustic:

> I watch the moving art
> Of all this magic impassioned pain
> That tells the story of the human heart
> In a false instance, such as poets feign;
> I smile, and keep within the parchment furled
> That prompts the passions of this strutting world.[9]

There is on the other hand the idealism of Josiah Royce, William E. Hocking, and Ralph Barton Perry; the creative evolution of Henri Bergson, Alfred Whitehead, and Bernard E. Meland, who see God as the process of creative growth. There are naturalists or instrumentalists like John Dewey who believe that God is history, and that all things are possible for the enlightened individual. There are theistic philosophers like the late Nikolai Berdyaev, Jacques Maritain, C. E. Joad, the late William Temple, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and Nels Ferré, who despite their differences see revelation as trustworthy in the Person known in biblical experience.

3. *Political institutions.* The morning newspaper is but the screeching evidence of the hunger and thirst after security. The variety of insecurities fall into two groups: some form of collectivism or some form of democratic life. Whether it is the "persistent struggle of the proletariat" of which Stalin wrote, or the "watchful interference, the resolute interference of the government" main-

[9] *The Hermit of Carmel and Other Poems* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n. d.). Used by permission of the publishers.

taining fair play for all men, as Woodrow Wilson interpreted democracy—with either the crisis is so terrifying that our lives cannot for a moment be shielded from the potential tragedy of open conflict which haunts our waking moments. Collectivism has degenerated to the level of faked trials of religious leaders in Bulgaria and Rumania; while democracy can descend to the vulgar nationalisms of Colonel McCormick, William Randolph Hearst, or the patronizing "American century" of Henry Luce. The possibility of a repetition of the moral madness of Hiroshima is described by W. H. Auden:

> Both professor and prophet depress,
> For vision and longer view
> Agree in predicting a day
> Of convulsion and vast evil,
> When the Gold Societies clash
> Or the mosses are set in motion
> To overrun the earth,
> And the great brain which began
> With lucid dialectics
> Ends in a horrid madness.[10]

CONTEMPORARY PREDICAMENT

From the Age of Faith to the Age of Anxiety—*with what results?* On our campuses the physical sciences are king. Any college or university administrator knows that in his seeking funds the word "science" is the magic key. To ask for money for the humanities, for the courses in

[10] *The Age of Anxiety* (New York: Random House, 1947). Used by permission of the publishers.

liberal arts that deal with ultimate values, is to receive faint response and meager enthusiasm. Yet physical science, for all its admitted importance, is morally neutral. It gives no sense of direction. We are a generation of college and university people all dressed up with degrees, but with nowhere to go, at present, except to international suicide. If this account seems exaggerated let a professional soldier, General Omar Bradley, speak:

> Our knowledge of science has clearly outstripped our capacity to control it. We have too many men of science; too few men of God. . . . The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. . . . We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.[11]

In social life our training has produced pessimism and despair, inevitable after the expenditure of so much emotional and spiritual energy. Throngs are trying to lose themselves, not in constructive social effort, but in excessive alcoholism, in the cheapest of Hollywood's products, and, on the more sophisticated levels, in existentialism. If the prevailing novels are any cultural index, we have seen a flood of psychoanalytic portrayals of sex perversion.

For Christianity there are three contemporary tendencies: First, there is a more vigorous literalism—obscurantist toward science and all liberal education, with an opposition toward all ecumenical movements, and a reemphasis in its most virulent form of treating the Bible

[11] From *The Progressive* (Milwaukee), January, 1949, p. 22.

in legalistic fashion as an arsenal of proof texts. Second, there is a liberalism, which has gullibly compromised with naturalism at so many points, that it has little biblical or experiential faith left. Third, there is a mature Christianity which has come through liberalism but gone beyond it; which is theologically mature, with a biblical realism, a perceptive social vision committed to a world-wide Christian concern and to the evangelization of the whole man.

Finally, our frustrations have brought many to a new humility. For the first time in Western civilization since the twelfth century we are not quite sure that man has all the answers. When a highly sensitive and gifted generation such as ours discovers that what it has called food has left it hungry, what it has called clothing has left it naked, what it has called happiness has failed to satisfy life's desires, then it begins to cry like a lonely child crying in the night, and that cry is a cry for God.[12]

[12]Adapted from Lynn Harold Hough, "Shining Stars of Expectation," in C. C. Morrison, ed., *The American Pulpit* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 150.

CHAPTER

II

BELIEF WHICH BECOMES MATURE[1]

THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS in Maryland requires that all officeholders believe in God. Similar provisions are found in Mississippi, Texas, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, North Carolina, and South Carolina. A case of blasphemy was tried before the Supreme Court of Maine in 1919, resulting in conviction, although the sentence was vastly different from those in Massachusetts in 1640, in Connecticut in 1646, in Maryland in 1649, and in Vermont in 1779, when death penalties were exacted for those who "blasphemed" or "denied Deity."

On the campus we would be the first to oppose the *methods* of our zealous ancestors, but we are wise enough to understand the profundity of their *motives*. Conscious that all men are fallible, they wanted to be sure that those who ruled over them were themselves ruled by One for whom all the nations were but a small thing.

SOME PROBLEMS OF BELIEF

One of the perplexing problems of belief in God is the intellectual demand of finding meaning in the phenomenal

[1] This chapter, in slightly different form, originally appeared in *motive,* October, 1948, and is reprinted by permission of the editor.

world, which, if not hostile, often appears morally indifferent. Many a student can say with Tennyson:

> For why is all around us here
> As if some lesser god had made the world,
> But had not force to shape it as he would? [2]

Sir Isaac Newton saw in every leaf and squirrel the hand of God. But John Stuart Mill, equally observant, saw nature as cruel, in which the stronger killed the weaker and only the powerful survived, entirely independent of cosmic justice.

Admittedly this is a perplexing problem. But if it is difficult to believe in God in the presence of earthquakes, disease germs, and other physical disasters, we are persuaded *it is more difficult to disbelieve.* A man of unbelief shows us a universe of which our planet is but a minor fragment, revolving in the orbit of a sun whose flaming heat leaps 6 million miles in space, and a Milky Way which, though but a belt in the sky, has 170 billion suns in its own right, rotating upon an immense pin wheel 480 quadrillion miles wide once every 220 million years; and he suggests that this incredibly accurate cosmic timing is purely accidental. It may be hard for one to believe, but in the face of the predictability and order of the physical world, many of us are persuaded it is much harder to disbelieve.

Another problem characteristic of many campuses is that of the brilliant naturalistic professor who is openly hostile to the Christian faith. To make the problem more

[2] *The Passing of Arthur.*

acute for the discriminating student, he may be intellectually competent, socially charming, an admirable husband; he may have beautifully behaved children and give more than adequate evidence that he is "just as good" as the professor who is a man of faith. And he often is.

First of all, let us look at his background. Quite frequently he has been reared in a Christian atmosphere where everything creative and winsome in his life has come by way of the City of God. In candidly preferring the City of Man he acts the part of a spiritual parasite, accepting all he can from the heritage of faith but contributing nothing to it. This is intellectual and moral dishonesty and ought to be recognized as such. Or his attitude may betray some understandably psychological reaction from unfortunate expressions of religion in childhood, adolescence, or early maturity. Dean Charles W. Gilkey found two social scientists at the University of Chicago completely hostile to the religious program. One of them had begun his career as a highly emotional evangelist. The other had been reared in a sincere but legalistic Christian home where the frustrations of those inhibited years were reflected in an uncritical abuse of *all forms* of faith.

In the presence of these who are unsympathetic to the religious program of our campus one needs also to realize that the last chapter in their lives has not yet been written. The Light which lighteth every man coming into the world has many ways of conquering the darkness. Often the secularists will work with Christian groups in the World Student Service Fund. Bernard Iddings Bell in

an *Atlantic* article [3] gives an impressive list of intellectuals, a decade ago openly hostile to the Christian tradition, who have changed to active pleaders for a vital faith: Alfred Noyes, Middleton Murray, T. S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, Ross Hoffman, Arnold Lunn, Gilbert Chesterton, Jacques Maritain, Henry A. Wallace, Ralph Adams Cram, Gerald Heard, William Orton, Sheila Kaye-Smith, Paul Elmer More, and Heywood Broun. If classroom lectures are antagonistic to religion, peppered with naturalistic arsenic, this is the best evidence of spiritual poverty and lack of good taste on the part of the instructor.

The moral problem is another with which serious-minded students must deal. Leslie Weatherhead has spent twenty-five years in personal counseling in both Manchester and London, bringing to such important work the contributions of psychology and religion. It is his conviction that the great majority of men and women who say they cannot become Christian because of intellectual difficulties over the virgin birth, the atonement, the second coming of Christ, the Genesis account of creation, and the deity of Christ, finally, after persistent questioning, come to the *real* problem: a moral tension. One does not want to do an injustice to many students who have honest intellectual problems on these matters. But I am convinced, out of my own brief years in the pastorate, that a great many people stay away from church because they do not want the *ultimate* standards of the Christian faith to disturb the complacency of their *relative* secularistic standards.

[3] "Those Who Came Back," November, 1940.

Sometimes this evasion is quite unconscious. Among the discerning it is quite deliberate. A friend of mine of serious purpose told me frankly that he refrains from regular worship because he will not repeat the prayer of General Confession, since he does not believe himself a sinner.

This problem is one of major importance because it is often not fully appreciated. Those subconsciously afraid that a commitment to a religious purpose will cost something, that it will require an acceptance of responsibility and may effect an unwanted change in behavior patterns, find means of avoiding any religious expression that will expose these weak places in their intellectual and volitional armor. They are perceptive enough to recognize a basic truth: *faith in God is not primarily an intellectual matter;* it is partly intellectual; it is *the commitment of the whole person—mind, emotion, will—to the highest we know.*

The wider problem of evil also intrudes. Oscar Wilde said that there was enough tragedy upon every street corner of London to disprove the fact of God. When one reads what Arabs and Jews did to one another in Palestine, when one witnesses the agonies of a person in the last stages of cancer, when a walk through Harlem reveals the level of degradation to which the richest nation on earth has subjected those whom it considers socially inferior, when illness, failure, finally death, confront us—what then?

We forget that our Christian faith has never promised to the believer, any more than to the unbeliever, freedom from suffering. We live in a world of moral as well as physical law, where man's freedom may be disciplined in

a co-operative United Nations or exploited by antisocial leaders who are merely greedy for gain. The Christian tradition does not promise freedom from evil; it does promise an inner power with which to meet it: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Ps. 46:1.) Or again, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." (23:4.) Here is no sentimental promise of freedom from pain for the believer—a travesty of *faith*—but here is the release within us of the resources beyond us with which to meet tragedy. If the presence of evil is a problem for the student of faith, the presence of goodness is the problem for the student of unbelief.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF UNBELIEF

Psychologically there is no person without a faith—some cohesive center of loyalty to which he is consciously or unconsciously dedicated. Surrounding the campus are people whose *real commitment,* regardless of verbal professions, is to their families, to the D. A. R., to Tommy Dorsey, to the Republican Party, to success in business, to "America first," to classical music, to Harvard, to the Kiwanis Club, or to fine literature. Each of these loyalties may have some relative value; some of them call for reflective maturity. That they are the *ultimate* loyalty for millions of Americans is not only shocking but a revealing indictment of what John Galsworthy says has happened to the man of democracy—he is going down the road followed at a more-or-less respectful distance by his soul.

What is faith? Luther said: "In what thing soever thou

hast thy mind's reliance and thine heart fixed, that is beyond doubt thy God." Nels Ferré defines it: "Religion is our normally necessary whole response to what is considered to be most important and most real." [4] No culture, not even Rome under Augustus with all its pluralisms, has had more gods than our own—some we hold intellectually, some psychologically, and some volitionally. Nationalism may be our *real* God, even as Mussolini could say: "Everything in the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside the State." The superficialities of our contemporary civilization, which Lewis Mumford describes as the "organized inanities" producing people "equally empty of human standards and aims," may call forth our real loyalties. Our immediate wants may be our actual gods, even as in the primitive religions today among the Melanesians or the Zuñi are found many of the goals duplicated in the palatable and dangerously popular books of Henry C. Link and Dale Carnegie. There is not the slightest guarantee in the Christian faith that by believing in God we shall automatically be a millionaire or a "Phi Bete," or marry the president's daughter, or that Alabama will beat Georgia.

REVELATION

God as revealed by Jesus is a seeking God. Man does not have to do all the searching: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7.) God is the creator and sustainer of history. The creator is greater than his creation in just the same

[4] *Faith and Reason* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1946), p. 4.

way that the eighteenth-century deists said that the watchmaker was greater than his watch, or as Bach was greater than his music. God is active in the historical struggle. In the Old Testament, man is urged to rest one day in the week; but after the initial anthropomorphic picture in Genesis, God is never at rest and is always active in creativity. In history he becomes real and his purposes become plain to sensitive men like Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Augustine, Aquinas, and Wesley, and through them and others he actively participates in the affairs of men. He is often frustrated by "stiffnecked" and "rebellious" people. Yet he chose a pagan Cyrus as the administrator of his purposes. Even the wrath of man is ultimately used to praise God.

Having revealed himself through many persons and in many eras, God has uniquely revealed himself in the life and teachings of a person. Does it ever seem incredible to us that this person was a little-known Jewish carpenter who was born in modest circumstances, and who was killed at the age of thirty-three, who never traveled farther than ninety miles from the place where he was born, and was so poor he had no roof above his head? This was one who owned no real estate, founded no institutions, attended no college, organized no army; who never produced a book and made no attempt to preserve his ideas; and whose only writing was done in the sand and quickly obliterated by the wind; one who was honored by no university, government, or city; who was deserted by his friends and thought insane by most of his family; who was finally put to death as any ordinary vagrant of

his day; who is either hated or devotedly loved by more men of all races than any other leader; and one whose spirit has inspired a world-wide fellowship embracing more than 600 million people—does this Jesus ever seem incredible to us?

WHAT GOD IS LIKE

There are two aspects of God's character, each of which demands the other for completeness; and the overemphasis of one can prostitute our faith to either a dour legalism or a sentimental emotionalism. The biblical God is a God of righteous judgment. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth," Amos portrays God saying to Israel, "therefore I will punish you." With a terrible realism the prophets of any age of complacency from Amos to Karl Barth have emphasized this inexorable justice of the Most High:

> Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
> He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
> He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
> His truth is marching on.

The imperative corollary to God's justice is his redemptive love, but I hesitate to use that word, because "love," like the man in Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan, has fallen among thieves and robbers who have stripped it, and beat it, and left it bedraggled beside the cultural road. *Eros* is a Greek word for love which indicates an over-

concern for self. This word Jesus did not use. *Philia* is another Greek word for love, meaning mutuality, reciprocity, loving those who love us—a higher type of devotion than *eros,* but still based upon receiving in equal measure that which we give. But Jesus used *agape,* a profound word to which scholars like Moffatt and Nygren have given entire volumes to assess its meaning in terms of its historical associations. To act toward another in terms of *agape* does not necessarily mean we "like" a person; it is certainly not self-love or *eros;* it is far more than mutuality or *philia,* for Jesus said even the Pharisees loved in that way. It is not maintaining an attitude toward another because we "like" him or feel drawn to him, although both of these may be true; but it is holding an attitude toward him which we believe God holds, because the person, like ourselves, is a child of God. This is not sentimental love; although romantic, emotional love is recognized as potentially beautiful in the New Testament. "Christian love," says Lynn T. White, "is an *active* desire that all men shall have that same abundance of life which I desire for those of my own family and for myself."

If I came home from my college office some evening and found a drunken man attacking my wife I would knock him down, if I could, and turn him over to the police. This I would do for his own good as well as for my wife's, for he would be violating his own manhood in his antisocial conduct. But if I really had the capacity to act in *agape* toward him, I would seek every means for his rehabilitation, for an understanding of the factors in

his heredity and environment which led him to such behavior; and I would practice unremittingly *active good will* toward him, not because I "like" him or we have anything in common, but because he, like myself, is a child of God.

Such Christian love is impossible for us upon a merely human level. If we can occasionally attain it at all, it is only because something of the depth of God's love toward us becomes real. In a physician's waiting room a nurse told me she had never had difficulty understanding God's willingness to suffer in man's behalf because her own father had made such love unmistakably clear when she was a small girl. Her mother had not been well and had asked her to come immediately from school to help with the housework. But the lure of playing with a neighbor's child had proved too strong, and she did not arrive until the dinner hour. There was no scolding. Her father merely told her that while they were having chicken that evening—one of her favorite delicacies—she could have none. After grace her mother was served, then her brother, then her father, while she had before her only a slice of bread and a glass of water. As she began to eat, she noticed out of the corner of her eye that her father was silent and that his hand was trembling. Then quietly he reached for her plate and substituted his own, saying, "Your father will take your punishment for you."

Something of the profundity of *agape* was glimpsed by a sensitive poet of the Hebrew exile who looked forward to a mighty king who would turn from all political ar-

rogance to the role of a suffering servant, that his people might be redeemed: "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:5.) It is not strange that when the early Christian community thought of Jesus steadfastly setting his face toward Jerusalem and enduring the cross, it seemed appropriate to apply these ancient words to him.

The Christian tradition has emphasized a paradox concerning God: He is above us, transcendent, beyond time and history; otherwise his creativity cannot be understood in its full dimensions. He has purposed a kingdom of God, a fellowship of dedicated people already realized within many human hearts, a growing organism wherever such dedication is increasing individually and in society; but to be realized finally beyond history. Yet God is also immanent, closer than the air we breathe; he can see a bird fall from its nest; he counts the hairs of our heads and knows each of us by name.

No question arises more often than this: How does one come to a knowledge of God? It is a pertinent question. Christian history has constantly reminded us that men have come to know God in ways quite similar to those by which they know one another. Occasionally on the campus we have sought out someone deliberately and have cultivated his friendship. At other times, a circumstance in a fraternity house or a residence hall, or being seated next to someone in class, has accidentally provided opportunity for acquaintance.

Horace Bushnell suggested that a Christian home ought to provide the most natural place for knowing the Heavenly Father so that one could never remember the time when God was not known. The experience of others also provides us with spiritual knowledge, just as Schweitzer helps us to understand Bach, and Boswell illumines Dr. Johnson. Here is one of the meaningful reasons for studying on a mature level the Bible and church history, so that Isaiah, Paul, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Rufus Jones can each make his contribution to our knowledge of God. Prayer and worship offer a discipline of devotion which many of us have found indispensable aids to the habitual growth of spiritual experience. Reflective thinking upon the highest intellectual level has been a pathway to God for many, from Descartes to Einstein, because a laboratory as well as an altar may well prove to be hallowed ground. Some of us have learned to know each other better through common work pursued where a sense of fellowship in a work camp or a summer conference has in subtle but telling ways made vivid the presence of the Great Friend. It was not in mystical contemplation but in the daily job done in a spirit of dedication that Galen, doctor of Marcus Aurelius, came to know the Great Physician. "I bound his wounds," Galen said of a patient, "but God healed him." Again, the pathway to God may be by way of the aesthetic. Living with a picture in which an artist has said on canvas what could never be said in words, listening to Brahms's Seventh Symphony, holding in one's hand a lovely creation in ceramic—all these are open doors to the beauty of holi-

ness; and impoverished is the person who is deprived of this gracious knowledge of the Author of perfection.

Perhaps the most important sentence in the Bible to our wistful campus generation contains those haunting words to a distraught people, so familiar to us through the Holy Week oratorio: "'If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me.' Thus saith our God."

CHAPTER

III

THE BIBLE AND THE CONTEMPORY MIND

DURING THE PAST WAR a clever GI in London was invited to a banquet, where, despite the austerity, a good time was had by all. To his surprise, he found himself next to an Anglican bishop. Desperately the American strove to make a good impression by chatting away effervescently about such substantial matters as whether the Yankees would win the American League pennant this year, or whether General Montgomery was better at poker than General Mark Clark. He got no response from the ecclesiastical dignitary. Finally he asked himself: "What would a bishop be interested in, anyhow?" Light dawned. Turning on all the charm at his command he said: "Your Grace, I want you to know I just *love* the Bible."

"Well," said his neighbor, "I am happy to hear so encouraging a word from an intelligent young man. And may I ask what *part* of the Bible you feel is most impressive?"

"Why . . . uh . . . that is . . . well, I have been much impressed by that scene where Lady Macbeth is pacing up and down the floor of her bedroom crying out in her frenzy: 'Out, damned spot, out!' " And believing that

he had made a magnificent recovery, he continued, "And what part of the Bible do *you* find most impressive?"

"Well," said the bishop, somewhat conversant with American publications, "I have seldom been more moved than by that scene where Scarlett O'Hara is standing above the burned ruins of her home, Tara, lifting her hand to yonder sky and crying: 'Never again will I go hungry.' "

WHY THE BIBLE IS UNREAD

The point of this little story is altogether too obvious: our generation—on and off the campus—is almost illiterate concerning even the major personalities and ideas of the Bible. Let us consider with candor some reasons why this generation, certainly not without spiritual interests, is so wholly ignorant of matters on which our parents' generation was well informed:

1. The Bible is seldom printed in a readable and attractive format. Nine out of ten editions of Scripture are bound in black. The late James Moffatt used to ask why the "good news" of the gospel should always be enclosed with a funereal cover? Would it not be more appropriate, he suggested, to enclose it in the colors with which God has covered the earth? The blue of the sky? The gold of the sunshine? The green of the grass?

Frequently the Bible is both formidable and forbidding: words huddled together on a page; India paper obstinately sticking when one hurriedly seeks a passage; thin paper refusing either ink or pencil; scanty margins with no invitation to relaxed reading; a gutter of cross

references dragging the eye to the brink of the page, or to a river of diluted interest in its center; or to a Gehenna at the bottom. It is a remarkable tribute to the Book of books that, suffering from such publishers' blights as these, it is read at all.

Happily, there is an increasing number of attractive formats which, paradoxically, are sold at less prohibitive prices than the morocco-bound unreadable editions. There is a most attractive edition of the King James version edited by Professor Bates, entitled *The Bible as Living Literature.*[1] The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament[2] is commendably readable—the page size is practical; its blue cover is appealing. At greater cost are beautiful editions by our best publishers and very fine individual books of the Bible printed by the Peter Pauper Press.

2. There is the confused question, What edition shall I buy? Shall it be the King James of 1611? The English Revised of 1885? The American Standard[3] of 1901? The Revised Standard New Testament of 1946? Or one of the so-called modern translations such as Weymouth,[4] Smith-Goodspeed,[5] or Moffatt?[6]

There is no easy answer to such a question. What is the "best" college in the United States: Vassar, DePauw,

[1] New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936.
[2] New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1946.
[3] New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons.
[4] *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1936).
[5] *The Bible: An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935).
[6] New York: Harper and Bros., 1922.

Stanford? Obviously there are differences which should be understood, values and limitations to be found in each translation. That there is no one best should not blind us to the fact that some are infinitely better than others. The King James translation of 1611—and no reader of these pages would say "St. James" knowing of King James I of England!—is a classic piece of literary work, largely a revision of a revision of Tyndale's seventeenth-century manuscript. Its Elizabethan prose, its elevated poetic passages, have so woven themselves into the cultural texture of Western civilization that a person who is unfamiliar with these sublime passages is ill at ease in the presence of our greatest poets, musicians, and essayists whose art is heightened by the beauty of its expression.

The twentieth century, however, is not the seventeenth. Archaic words such as "bolled," "ouches," "amerced," and "daysman" have no meaning to men who live in a vastly different world. "Charity," in Paul's great chapter in First Corinthians, should obviously be changed to "love" for *agape* the Greek noun. The three oldest manuscripts of the Bible now available have all been discovered since 1611. Scholars have in the meantime learned much more about Hebrew and Greek. No thoughtful person, therefore, will be unappreciative of the relative technical accuracy, and the immense amount of reverent scholarship which has made possible the newer versions.

As to the modern translations, if they have limitations, they have also virtues. The late James Moffatt's translation is graphic, brilliant in parts, eccentric in other parts, British in language, often using the paraphrase rather

than a literal rendering of the Hebrew or Greek. The American Translation is much more accurate than Moffatt's; it uses the American rather than the British idiom and seeks to put language in the best American vernacular even as the New Testament was written in the usage of the more intelligent common man of the first century. The Weymouth, Twentieth Century, and Basic English Testaments each has a unique contribution, but they are less useful except for the specialist.

Which translation, then, is "best"? Every thoughtful person should have in his library at least three editions: the King James for the stately renditions of many memorable passages; one of the revised versions for the most accurate handling of the Bible; and either the American Translation or the Moffatt Bible for clarifying difficult and obscure passages, especially in the Hebrew prophets and in parts of Paul's letters.

3. Another difficulty in reading the Bible is in the fact that we are reading, not a single volume, but a library, and the books are not chronologically arranged. One would expect Genesis quite properly to be the earliest book in Hebrew literature, but scholars are agreed that in its present form it is one of the last books in the Old Testament to have been written. To find the first book chronologically, one must turn to that valuable but almost unread book of Amos. Again, in the New Testament one would expect Matthew, beginning with the genealogy of Jesus, to be the earliest book in the Christian community. Actually, the scholars are agreed that all of Paul's letters precede it; and Mark, though it follows Matthew, is ac-

tually one of the major sources from which the author of Matthew drew. For the first book chronologically we need to turn through more than half the New Testament literature to Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica.

This means that to be thoughtful students of the Bible we need not only three different editions but also at least one, and preferably several, guide books. There are many available that are excellent. If I were to get but one, I should unhesitatingly choose Henry K. Booth's, *The Background of the Bible.*[7] For a second book of immense value, portraying in cogent thought and graphic style such basic problems as the Old Book in a new world, science and religion, miracles, the deity of Jesus, and so forth, I should get Harry Emerson Fosdick's, *The Modern Use of the Bible.*[8] For one who is teaching and has occasion to be aware of archaeology, biblical history, and brief introductions to each book in the Scripture, I should get E. W. K. Mould's *Essentials of Bible History.*[9] For more mature study, treating in chronological fashion the growth and development of six major ideas in biblical literature, such as God, man, immortality, I should get Fosdick's more recent volume, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible.*[10]

4. The coed who said she wasn't interested in history, but was willing to "let bygones be bygones" may have

[7] New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928.
[8] New York: Macmillan Co., 1940.
[9] New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons., 1939.
[10] New York: Harper and Bros., 1938.

problem, and particularly so with the student coming out of a tradition which treats each book and chapter as of equal value with every other.

A student came to me several years ago with obvious been pleasant but hardly perceptive. Here is a formidable concern over the books of Joshua and Judges. "Did you know," she said in anxiety, "that when the Hebrews captured the city of Ai they ruthlessly killed every man, woman, and child—twelve thousand in all? That they took the carcass of the king and hung it up by the side of the road? Such stories of atrocity by people who were supposed to be religious are frightful! If I ever have children, I shall never let them read the Bible!"

I have deep sympathy for those who recoil from such primitivism in the name of a high religion. But this is precisely why we must read the Bible with a view to its *historical framework.* We do not condemn five-year-old children for lack of knowledge of solid geometry, of *Macbeth,* or of Picasso. The early records of the Hebrews reveal to us a potentially mature spiritual people in the childhood of their pilgrimage. What is thrilling in biblical study is to realize that God could use even so depraved a folk as the early Hebrews at their worst, and that out of them could develop such exalted perception as: "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6:8.)

5. Reading the Bible takes disciplined intellectual effort and mature spiritual appreciation. Here, in my judgment, is one of the most important reasons why the Bible

is not read today in this technological age of tabloids and television. We can sit down—and nearly all of us do—with *Life* and *The Reader's Digest,* both more-or-less creditable publications but both aimed at the mind of about a twelve-year-old, and no great strain is made on our intellect. We can mentally gallop through most best sellers without even the pause that refreshes. But we cannot scan Plato's *Republic* like that, or Browning's *Paracelsus.* These classics require the most exacting intellectual discipline and spiritual maturity for their full understanding. To be sure, many of the patriarchal stories of the Bible are easy reading for children and are enjoyed by them. But the pathos of thousands of otherwise mature people is that they have *never read anything in the Bible* but these pastoral stories. Jeremiah, the Isaiah of the Exile, Job, Paul's letter to the Romans, the book of Hebrews, are glorious, but they are not all easy reading. One should not take on the Logos concept in the Fourth Gospel after eleven o'clock at night. But if we approach them in the spirit of our best intellectual discipline, when our minds and hearts are open to some of the choice spiritual experience in the entire pilgrimage of man, the reading of the more difficult passages is an exhilarating experience.

6. When I entered my freshman class in religion, the controversy over the "higher criticism" of the Bible was at its height in that section of the country. Tensions were high, college professors "suspect," the semantics of orthodoxy a delicate issue. The infamous Scopes Trial at Dayton, Tennessee, had recently been held. Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan, the protagonists of that

memorable battle of words, were still symbols of atheism and faith. Henry L. Mencken was boasting that his *American Mercury* was more widely read on every college campus than was the Bible; and in my own fraternity house, in a denominational college, that was true.

Now we live in a different world. Lewis Mumford says that any man is a fool who does not know a thousand years went by from 1930 to 1940. But lack of rapport between science and religion, although in a new frame of reference, is just as acute as formerly. Even for those outside the framework of institutional religion one of the most perplexing academic problems is this very issue.

A serious student comes from a class in natural science where cause and effect are related on the basis of predictable, orderly processes. He opens his Bible: an ax head swims on the water; a leader of people lifts his arm, and a major body of water separates, allowing his people passage on dry land; a dead man comes out of his tomb wearing his grave clothes—these incidents perennially represent a conflict of loyalties to a sensitive person who wants to believe, but who must be intellectually honest. It is a creative moment when the individual discovers that these matters have nothing to do with his faith. But the mature college students of today—and they are, I believe, more thoughtful than those of my own generation—go beyond these obvious problems to the deeper matters of the Genesis account of creation, the infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus, and the Resurrection.

Churches and summer conferences owe a solemn debt to young people to help them in these difficult matters. The

book which my own students have found most helpful is Fosdick's *Modern Use of the Bible,* particularly Chapter V on "Miracle and Law." Other sources are the chapter in John R. Dummelow's *Commentary on the Bible* [11] entitled "The Creation Story and Science," Lloyd C. Douglas' *Those Disturbing Miracles,*[12] and a very brief but suggestive chapter in S. Ralph Harlow's *Honest Answers to Honest Questions,*[13] "Does Scientific Research Throw Doubt on Religious Truths?"

To see that science and religion are both *aspects* of truth, and that properly understood they are indispensable aids to each other; to recognize that science deals with the weighable and the measurable, while religion deals with values, with ultimates, like love, truth, and beauty—these fundamental attitudes will aid one immensely.

7. Another reason why the Bible is seldom read is that, in light of our basic assumptions in regard to the elective system in much of contemporary education, values become ignored. Last fall hundreds of thousands of new students entered our colleges and universities. In most instances a sheet of paper was placed before them containing on one side "Required Courses." Among these were admirable opportunities as English IA, economics, physical education, and so forth. On the other side of the sheet were listed "Electives," including in all too many colleges those courses dealing primarily with values: philosophy, religion, Milton, Dante. We who are on

[11] New York: Macmillan Co., 1925.

[12] New York: Harper and Bros., 1927.

[13] New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1940.

boards of trustees and faculties, and who are parents, upon whom ultimately is the responsibility in American education, have said in fact to the contemporary student group: This is life as we see it. Your required courses contain what we regard as indispensable to the good life; the elective courses are good but peripheral; you may take them or leave them. Can we be surprised, therefore, that the vast majority of students leave them!

Even the celebrated Harvard Report, *General Education in a Free Society,*[14] after making a comprehensive survey regarding the urgency of the integration of the whole cultural process of Western civilization, is afraid to introduce the teaching of an objective, historical approach to religion because, "given the American scene with its varieties of faith and even of unfaith, we did not feel justified in proposing religious instruction as part of the curriculum." Imagine deleting courses in political science or economics for the same reason!

The immediate cultural tragedy of this fragmented, lopsided educational policy is an entire generation of adults most of whom discontinued any kind of systematic study of their Christian heritage—meager though that was—in adolescence, when the great proportion of young people drop church school. While their scientific, pseudo-historical studies go on, they arrive at a college diploma, view their mature scientific knowledge against the immature religious ideas they had at the age of fourteen, and the comparison is not favorable to religion. The number of otherwise intelligent adults whose biblical

[14] Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946.

knowledge has never gone past the fourteen-year age level is so appalling as to be one of the major problems within Protestant churches today.

But on a greatly higher level the whole concept of biblical revelation—the real essence of our Christian faith—is too often lost to men and women who in business and professional life are exceptionally capable people, but whose whole spiritual experience has been starved to a low level of maturity. They have an obscurantist approach to the major issues of life—the concept of God and of the validity of prayer, the understanding of eternal life, Christian ethics, and the implications of the Christian fellowship. This is true, since they have been denied in the normal academic channels an intelligent, historical study of the biblical literature.

SOME WAYS OF READING THE BIBLE

These seven reasons why the Bible is not read are merely suggestive and are in no sense exhaustive. How, then, shall we approach this library of fascinating, picturesque, obscure, reflective literature? A modern scholar has suggested four possibilities:

The first is through its obvious beauty spots, the way most people know the Bible. Let us suppose that I have a friend living in Maine who has two-weeks vacation. He has never visited that sprawling, sensational, unpredictable combination of High Sierras, U. S. C. football teams, and Hollywood which makes up California. He writes me that because of train connections he will have but three days in the state—nearly a thousand miles in

length, four hundred miles in width. Can I show him "all of California" in this time! Well, I do my best! I meet his train at the Nevada border, whisk him down to Lake Tahoe for lunch; we rush to San Francisco for the evening and do Chinatown, the Mark Hopkins, plus Berkeley and San Quentin, before midnight! The next morning we fly to Yosemite National Park for lunch and look at the bears; we fly to Santa Barbara and view the Pacific before dinner; the next day we do Los Angeles, Hollywood, the homes of some of the Academy Award winners; we fly along the coast over Oceanside to La Jolla and San Diego; we drive madly over the border to Tia Juana to see the gambling dens, the race tracks, the tourist trinket shops; we fly the next morning to Palm Springs, where in this fabulous desert resort we have luncheon, to be interrupted by a fast drive through the date palms to the Arizona border for my friend's return train home. And he, somewhat breathless but satisfied, writes a book about California.

To a resident of this not unworthy state, such tourist observation is not unusual but scarcely adequate! Yet this is not too far-strained an illustration of the experience of the Bible which the great majority of people have: some of the matchless stories of Joseph, the twenty-third psalm, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, some parables of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. These are incomparably noble passages of the Book. But how casual, how superficial, and how inadequate they seem when compared with the extent of the biblical knowledge of Edgar

Allan Poe, who though a pantheist knew the Scriptures so intimately that there are seven hundred biblical references in his best-known works; or of Robert Browning, who in but one poem, *The Ring and the Book,* has so many biblical references that to list them takes twelve pages. Shakespeare, Milton, John Ruskin, and Thomas Hardy knew the whole of the Bible. So did the generation of our parents.

A second and more mature way of knowing the Bible is through some of its notable personalities. There is no study so interesting as the study of people. "And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died." And that is all he ever did according to the record. Here is the longest life parabolically given on record, with not one deed from birth until death worth mentioning. What a contrast to the life of Jesus, so brief in comparison with this alleged marathon of continuity. But of Jesus it was said, he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

When the Hebrews were on the desert of the Sinaitic peninsula, they constructed a place of worship in tent-like form known as the tabernacle. One part of this structure, anticipating the temple in Jerusalem, was the holy of holies, into which only the high priest could go, and he but once a year. Moses needed an artist to make this sacred spot worthy of the symbols of the Most High. But Judaism produced no artists because of the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," and the fear of seeking to confine God in stone or on canvas. But Bezaleel, lonely man that he must have

been, was an artist. And Moses commissioned him to one of the most important but least appreciated responsibilities ever given an artist. He was to make the holy of holies a fit dwelling place for the ark of the covenant and then to withdraw, knowing that no one but the high priest would ever see his work. From the record we know of no other time in his entire life that Bezaleel was allowed to practice his art! That is pathos in biography. That is in the Bible.

To stand with Isaiah in the Temple and see the vision of the Lord in his glory; to share the grief of Jeremiah mourning over the ruins of Jerusalem; to enter with Paul into that Roman prison and hear his last jubilant words of faith; to walk with the Christ from Bethlehem to Calvary—these are inspirational experiences of vastly greater help to our souls than the most complete familiarity with the words and texts of the Bible.[15]

A third way of study, much more fruitful, is that of viewing the individual books of the Bible in the light of contemporary social problems. Let us select from the front page of any newspaper the matter of social justice, the relative merits and demerits of Western capitalism, the criticism of Marxian socialism, the tensions between capital and labor. To what book of the Bible can one go in which the principles which underlie possible solutions may be discovered?

One night a fairly well-to-do rancher, whose residence was outside Tekoa, was awakened by the roar of a lion.

[15] Booth, p. 266.

He jumped from his bed, grasped a club, hurried through the darkness to see the hungry beast dragging across the ground a choice lamb. Beating the invader off and rescuing his frightened and bleeding little animal, he held it close as he lay down with heavy breath and without sleep. This vivid moment was for him contemporary history written large. A vast totalitarian empire, Assyria, was about to devour Israel, a fragile Hebrew kingdom, and would easily be successful unless the people were abruptly warned. But having eyes these people saw not, and having ears they heard not. They were smug in their sophistication. They were led by religious teachers who cried "peace, peace" when there was no peace. Against such a barrier of insensitivity, Amos knew the potential frustrations of the prophet of an unpopular message. He and his spiritual successors have known the urgency of speaking God's word. They have also known the anguish of watching that word ignored or vilified.

Facing uncompromisingly these possibilities, Amos may be imagined taking a date book from his pocket, and reading of a speaking appointment the following Tuesday afternoon at the Women's Club of Bethel. When he stood before this self-satisfied group of well-manicured, well-coiffured ladies—in dresses from the Saks Fifth Avenue of Jerusalem and with shoes by the I. Miller of Damascus—he had the audacity to address them with these scornful words: "You cows of Bashan." Of course they threw him out of the club house! But not before he had said something like this to them: In this hour of crisis what do you think religion is? Going through meaningless

motions of pure ritual, when the world is on the brink of ruin, partly through your callous indifference to the poor, your exploitation of the underprivileged, and your vulgar sense of values? You sleep at night on beds of carved ivory, covered with gorgeous silken coverlets, while the women on the wrong side of the tracks have no beds at all to sleep on, and nothing to keep them from the chill of the Palestinian air.

> Let justice roll down like waters,
> And righteousness like a perennial stream.
> (Amos 5:24, Amer. Trans.)

The rhythmic and poetic speeches of Amos at Bethel, Samaria, and elsewhere—recorded in a little-read book, the words of a man condemned by a false religious education into being a "Minor Prophet"—compose one of the notable tracts on social justice to be found in any literature. Its belief that the message of God's righteousness must include the entire orbit of life, that God is the God, not only of the Hebrews, but even of their despised enemies, the Egyptians and the Assyrians; and the optimistic hope that a remnant would be spiritually sensitive to the judgment of God—these form one of the heights of biblical revelation.

Or let us assume that our major interest is in political science, with the problem of nationalism versus universalism. How can the United States be loyal to a particular and unique democratic tradition, and yet be loyal to a world-federalist movement through which nations may seek a closer union? This is no new problem to man, and

it is not new for the student of the Bible. No more relentless, blind nationalism can be found in any literature than that which is expressed in that bitter but beautiful little book of Nahum, wherein the writer, a one hundred per cent Jewish fanatic, is heaping well-deserved maledictions upon Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. Less vitriolic but no less emphatic is Esther, who, despite her beautiful loyalty to her people—the part of the book which is told to children—gives her uncritical approval to one of the most frightful public massacres of Gentiles ever recorded in Western history, which is the part of the book *not* told to children. The last chapters of Esther reek with blood. To such did Jewish nationalism at its worst descend.

But Jewish universalism always contended with this false idea of a misuse of the concept of the chosen people. The author of the book of Ruth, during a day when isolationists were prohibiting marriage with non-Jews, wrote this rare idyl to remind his blindly patriotic contemporaries that the great-grandmother of King David had been a Gentile. No tract of intercultural propaganda is more penetrating or more gracious. Jonah, in spite of all the misrepresentative talk about a whale, is in some respects the most moving book in the Old Testament. For when the reluctant missionary to Nineveh had his prayer answered—much against his real wishes—he discovered the patience and forgiveness of God, who would include even the depraved people of a totalitarian empire as his potential children.

The fourth and by far the most difficult, and in every re-

spect the most rewarding, possibility is the study of the Bible through an historical appreciation of the growth and development of some of its major ideas. Mark Twain was once told by a friend that what bothered him about the Bible was the parts he could not understand. To which the humorist made bold to reply: what bothered him about the Bible were the parts he *could* understand.

I know of nothing more intellectually stimulating and spiritually satisfying than to trace the growth and development of the idea of God from the primitive, nomadic period of Hebrew culture to the most elevated understanding of the New Testament. The book of Genesis—using early oral tradition, although of late composition—portrays an anthropomorphic God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, turning his back on needy man, becoming petulant and angry, finally casting man out of the garden in disgust and with derisive language. Contrast that with the growth and development of man's gradual understanding of God: Amos beholds him as a deity of social justice; Hosea, of suffering love; Isaiah, of exalted majesty; the Isaiah of the Exile, a God of universal, redemptive love, who gladly suffers in behalf of his people; finally, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

In like manner one can trace the concept of the dignity and worth of the individual from the beginning, where a person's ethical attitudes were wholly determined within the tribe; where to rob, mutilate, or murder a member of another Palestinian tribe was to do the will of God. Then

one sees this primitive concept grow and develop until man is estimable in all the Hebrew nation, then in all the Eastern Mediterranean; and finally one sees God enclosing the whole fabric of humankind, concerned that not "one of these little ones shall perish." Fosdick's *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* takes six of these biblical themes and traces them chronologically in fascinating ways.

THE CONTEMPORARY IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK

On or off the campus we are troubled with callousness to values. We become despairing, like Thomas Carlyle, over the slow progress Christianity seems to make. Yet the editor of the *Atlantic* writes that present-day readers, for all their limitations, are wistful:

> They are looking for the truth that man still does have dignity, that he is not simply a puppet twitched into love of war by his unconscious which pulls the strings; they are looking for some semblance of order; they are seeking for integrity; they are seeking for the will and imagination to believe that there is a cohesive power in mankind greater than the atomic bomb.[16]

The great-books foundations, the increasing emphasis in our prominent colleges and universities upon the humanities, the penetrating themes of our best dramatists, the influence of two deeply religious poets like T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, the activism in public education upon moral studies—all these attest to a hunger and thirst after

[16] Edward Weeks, *Atlantic*, January, 1949, p. 82.

meaning in life, if not after righteousness. In our Western heritage significance has been found—with the exception of the Greek dramatists and philosophers—through Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and their successors. These men have all been biblical scholars. To understand, therefore, art, poetry, drama, philosophy, and a great deal of fiction, one must bring to such a study a knowledge of the scriptural background upon which so much of our culture has been based.

We speak a great deal today of democracy as if it were a brilliant new idea which somebody thought up yesterday afternoon at four o'clock. Yet collectivism, not democracy, is the oldest form of social life. Totalitarianism, regimentation, the dictatorship of a few at the top, were not invented by Hitler, nor have any of their contemporary forms been innovations. To trace the Hebrew-Christian tradition from the eighth century B.C. throughout a notable history until it was given such salutary expression by the framers of the American Constitution is a thrilling study. The *fruits* of an idea will soon die, as Elton Trueblood reminds us, unless we nourish its *roots*.

For the Christian who would live in this world, yet be uncoerced by it, a knowledge of the Bible is indispensable. Here is a record of God's dealing with men through a thousand years of history and more years of well-authenticated tradition. Here is the response of men to God in devious and sublime ways, and the aftermath of two kinds of response in terms of individual tragedy and moral growth, social chaos and social righteousness. Here is a reminder of the unlimited resources of the spirit of

God in the hearts of men, so that we are assured that neither "things present, nor things to come, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

A WAY OF READING

"But where can I begin today?" Here is a persistent and proper question. Again and again my friends in the student body have told me that they come home from a student conference pledging themselves to read a Bible passage for devotional use every day. But letting their Bible fall open where it will, or attempting the chapter-a-day method, they at once run head-on into passages such as: "And so-and-so begat so-and-so." They grow weary in well doing. After a half-dozen futile attempts they give the Bible up as a book which must have some value, but which is completely irrelevant to the real issues which they face in their real world.

That conclusion is tragic, especially since we Protestants pride ourselves on our practicality. Actually, as E. Stanley Jones reminds us, the lost word in Protestantism is the word *how*. There are many valuable ways of reading. I suggest but one.

Suppose your younger sister, ten years of age, is told by your mother that she is to get dinner for the family some evening when her mother is to be away. The little lady, determined and serious, goes to the kitchen at five o'clock, gets out mother's largest mixing bowl and says: "What is the first thing we have at dinner? Oh yes, soup." After the can of soup has been poured into the bowl, then come the salad, meat, potatoes, gravy, coffee,

and a luscious cream pie with delectable meringue over the top. With the largest spoon available the *entire contents* are mixed and the eclectic result set on each person's plate. Consternation reigns! Yet the food is perfectly good. Our American habit of eating food in courses—some fraternities to the contrary—is not completely irrational.

The point of this story is not meant to be subtle. Genesis adequately understood is one of the most rewarding books of the Bible. *But it is not soup!* The place for most of us to begin reading is not in Genesis but in Mark. Here is the shortest of the Gospels, the first chronologically to be written; the Gospel of verbs, of action, of immediacy. For the salad, young women might read Luke, for it is the Gospel of Mary—her annunciation, her Magnificat. Here are the deeply significant parables of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan. Here is the healing ministry of our Lord in all of its sensitive response. Young men might appropriately read Matthew, for it is the man's Gospel, written to the Jewish community to persuade them that Jesus was the Messiah, come with redemptive purpose. Then to the entree—the Gospel of John. While it pays scant attention to the factual data about Jesus' life, here is the interpretive Gospel, the reflective setting down of what the living Christ meant to the early Church, in language so sublime and in pictures so moving that we are not surprised to know that John is always the first book of the Bible to be printed in a new language, and that it is therefore probably the most widely read piece of literature in the

world. Now to dessert—and what delectable dessert it is—the patriarchal stories in Genesis, the majestic Hebrew prophets, the treasure of Psalms, Paul's letters, and then for the other books, each with its vital and penetrating contribution to make, once the book is seen in its historical setting.

AN ISLAND AND A DISCOVERY

In the year 1769 King George III of England sent an expedition to the South Seas for astronomical purposes. The sailors fell in love with the beauty of the island, which was later named Tahiti. Another group made the venture in 1787 in a ship called *Bounty,* and the crew of forty-four engaged in transplanting trees from this luxuriant place to other islands to encourage migration. The crew liked, not only the island, but the island's inhabitants, and hearing that the captain planned to return soon to England, a part of them mutinied. Nine sailors snatched the *Bounty,* six native men, ten women, and a girl of fifteen, and sailed for an island they called Pitcairn. With an ample supply of liquor, their life in the ensuing months was no standard of excellence—from one brawl to another, from one murder to another—and the morale of the group degenerated. Within two years all the sailors but one, Alexander Smith, had been killed; and he, with his harem of native women and half-breed children, was sullen and planned to end it all in the sea.

Walking along the shore, however, he chanced upon a sailor's trunk, half-buried in the sand, and inside he found only some old clothes and a book. Nearly twenty years

went by before the United States naval ship *Topaz* called at Pitcairn Island. No word had been received of the mutineers by the outside world, and no visitors had called on them. The Americans went ashore heavily armed, ready for any eventuality. To their surprise they were met by a group of friendly, clean, healthy, happy people. There was no crime, no illiteracy, no dangerous disease. In a clearing in the center of the island were a little schoolhouse, a government office, and a church. Alexander Smith was teacher, governor, and preacher. Remember, no visitor had come to the island in all these years! What had changed this speck on the Pacific from a hell on earth to a little colony of heaven? A Book had been found in a sailor's trunk. *And that Book had been read.*[17]

[17] Adapted from Bruce Barton, *The Book Nobody Knows* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1926), pp. 302-6.

CHAPTER

IV

HOW MUCH "LOWER THAN THE ANGELS"?

Out of the avalanche of letters that have found their way into public print over the use of the atomic bomb, here are excerpts from two:

In its very existence, as well as in its employment, this engine is the ultimate and unspeakable perversion of the creative energies of the universe, a blasphemy uttered against the divine mystery in a diabolic moment, an intensity of murder never to be forgiven of God or of God in man.[1]

And the opposite view:

To regard the use of the atomic bomb as constituting in and of itself, a crime against humanity . . . is to mistake physical size for moral value. In what way does the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed by one bomb in each locality, differ from the destruction of Cologne and Hamburg, in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed by a large number of block-busters and "earthquake" bombs? In every respect except the method used the circumstances seem parallel.[2]

[1] From *The Christian Century,* August 29, 1945, pp. 982-83.
[2] From *The Christian Century,* September 19, 1945, p. 1066.

To differ on a point of conduct, even of such international consequence as the atomic bomb, is understandable. But each of these writers differs on the basis of his understanding of the teachings of Jesus. It is not necessary that both of these men be nationally distinguished leaders—although that happens to be true. It is enough that both are thoughtful, genuine, and deeply concerned to interpret in the light of Christian truth the cataclysmic event with which sensitive minds have been much occupied during the past months.

At no point in Jesus' own life did he arouse more consternation than in his comments on human conduct. Six times in the early part of Matthew we read these words: It was "said by them of old time. . . . But I say unto you. . . ." Loyal to the religion of his fathers though he was, something in this radical, new interpretation of life broke a long pattern in religious thought.

VARIETY OF INTERPRETATIONS

Yet Christian history is generous in revealing what a variety and confusion of interpretations have been made as to what kind of conduct is Christian. The early Church, for example, believed in nonresistance, and soldiers were not admitted to Church membership. Yet the Crusaders believed in holy wars and sang hymns of gratitude over the destruction of their enemies. At some periods the Christian Church has emphasized, through men like William Carey, John Wesley, and John Geddie, Christ's command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel." At other periods the highest loyalty to God was

the rejection of the world and the embracing of the monastic life. At one period in Christian history college professors were barred from membership in the Church. I know of at least one campus where I should hesitate to have that issue submitted to a student poll, lest history repeat itself. Today one of our major denominations bars from its rolls anyone engaged in the manufacture, sale, or distribution of alcoholic beverages. In the early Church, Christians were prohibited from accepting interest rates on money loaned, and were urged not to acquire property. Yet Thomas Aquinas in a learned thesis defended from the New Testament the private ownership of property and said that those who opposed his view were guilty of moral theft. In such confusion of thought it is not strange that equally earnest Christians could differ on such questions as women's rights, slavery, style of dress, church government, pacifism, and the use of the atomic bomb. A Christian conscience has been used—and often sincerely—for an incredible variety of beliefs and attitudes. There is on record the case of an Italian bandit who when brought into court, asked leniency on the grounds that for conscience' sake he had been scrupulously careful never to commit a murder on the Fridays in Lent!

THE NATURE OF JESUS' TEACHING

Dean Inge used to say that there are two kinds of fools: the man who rejects an idea because it is old, and the man who accepts an idea solely because it is new. But Jesus had no scorn of religion because it was old. Scholars have estimated that 95 per cent of his teachings are in

whole or in part from the Old Testament. There are more than one hundred direct quotations in his words from the faith of his fathers. He knew many of the psalms and great parts of the writings of the prophets by heart. But deeper still, his attitude of mind reflects not only the language but the spirit and dedication of the best of the Jewish faith. He did not even attack Judaism because of the Law. He attacked it because of the way its leaders misused the Law.

What was new in Jesus was primarily a new understanding of the depth and forgiveness of the love of God. The Christian faith is neither a moral philosophy nor an ethical system, but it is a religion. That is why Jesus talked, not about immortality, but about sin. Sin has no meaning unless we believe in a holy will of God. For sin is open rebellion against God's will. That is why there is—and always has been—a great gulf between a criminal and a sinner. Jesus died as a criminal.

Out of this new experience of God came a new emphasis in Jesus' regard for conduct. Right living was to be judged no longer by outward conduct but by inner intention. It was not murder as an act, primarily, that was evil, but the bitter hatred that lay behind the act. It was not immorality as an act that was evil alone. It was the evil desire and intent behind it that prompted him to say to the crowd about the woman of the street: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."

This meant that Jesus gave *no laws for conduct about anything*. He saw his generation with 1,421 laws concerning the use of the Sabbath day. And he saw the sham

and hypocrisy of the old attitude of seeking to attain character by an outward legalism alone. What he desired was a new will, a new purpose, a new dominating impulse, arising out of one's loyalty to God, which should activate a new type of man, so revolutionary in character that this change was likened to a new birth.

What Jesus said, therefore, he said, not because it was new, but because it was true. It provoked in men what Whitehead called "the infection of an uneasy conscience," not because a new law had coerced them, but because a new spirit had redeemed them. It was that spirit which Augustine caught when he set for his rule of conduct: "Love God, then do as you please." But the loving of a *righteous* God means that the new will exercises a greater discipline than under a law—not a discipline of outward coercion, but an inner impulsion to peace, and joy, and freedom.

When I was a small boy, I thought my mother, who is the finest of all mothers, had some very unpleasant ideas. One of them was that a ten-year-old should have his neck and ears soundly scrubbed each morning. I can remember yet how she wrapped her index finger with a washcloth and plunged it with excruciating firmness into my ear until I felt sure that it was coming out on the other side of my head! But in my freshman year in high school I sat in the study hall behind a girl with beautiful brown hair and gentle brown eyes, and one day she turned and smiled at me. That was all! The next morning a miracle took place in our household. My father and mother nearly had to batter down the bathroom door, while there I

stood in front of the mirror voluntarily washing my neck and ears!

Here was a radically new life revealed by Jesus when he said: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . . But I say unto you. . . ." For it affected conduct, not by precept, but by profoundly moving principles. Jesus said almost nothing about one's duty to the state; yet he was himself scrupulously loyal, even to an alien culture that held his nation in bondage.

And this new norm of conduct not only was new in its direction but also was new in its inclusiveness. Plato wrote as an aristocrat for aristocrats. He saw a stratified society, with various classes according to intellectual ability. All but those on top were referred to as "the others." Jesus by contrast was most concerned for the disfranchised—the poor, the captive, the blind, the broken-hearted, and the bruised. He identified himself with the poor, the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner. Jesus' order was not simply a reversal of the existing one, not "pie in the sky" for the few, not a "soak the rich" program; but, with true distinctions between the dedicated and the undedicated, it was open to both rich and poor, ignorant and erudite—but on valid spiritual foundations.

Here, then, is the crux of the matter. Jesus gave no absolutes in his teaching in the way of content—of legal rules for Christian conduct. If we have a religion of law, we can theoretically keep its requirements. But if we have a religion of a new relationship to God, then we can only approximate its requirements. When we were children,

and our relationships in love to parents were childlike, we could satisfy the requirements of that love by mowing the lawn, keeping within our allowance, and wearing a clean shirt. But when adolescence came, the relationship of love was on an infinitely higher level and a more delicate scale, with more intricate and involved situations; and even with our best efforts we could only approximate that level of love and loyalty which we should choose. While there is no absolute of legal content, there is a higher absolute—an absolute of loyalty to God. Jesus lived by that absolute himself, so that the surest test of his leadership for conduct is found in his own person.

DANGERS IN EVALUATING CHRIST'S ETHIC

Are there no guideposts to help a desperately needy postwar world? Are there no directions in our personal problems toward decisions for Christian conduct? Must we be that kind of superficially balanced person of whom Thomas Hardy once wrote, one who has no profound convictions and no loyalties for which one would give his life?

A well-proportioned mind is one which shows no particular bias; one of which we may safely say that it will never cause its owner to be confined as a madman, tortured as a heretic, or crucified as a blasphemer. Also, on the other hand, that it will never cause him to be applauded as a prophet, revered as a priest, or exalted as a king. Its usual blessings are happiness . . . and mediocrity, enabling its possessors to find their way to wealth, to wind up well, to die comfortably in their

beds, and to get the decent monument which . . . in many cases, they deserve.[3]

This kind of "well-proportioned mind" is found at the level of a type of intellectual, who, seeing all ethical decisions to be relative, has no absolute at all. As Walter Muelder emphasizes, some men are so pathologically afraid of the differences between left and right they forget there is a high and low. But for others even horizontal distinctions are vague, and black and white have become a nebulous grey. This was precisely the pathos of Prime Minister Chamberlain's persuading himself and most of the democracies that by selling Czechoslovakia down the river at Munich he had purchased peace in our time. At its best this attitude represents complacency in the face of gross moral injustice. At its worst it is the utter repudiation of spiritual responsibility. It is Pilate washing his hands before the crowd.

Another danger in evaluating Christ's ethic is that of equating our creed or our social program with the ultimate will of God. Both conservative and liberal Christianity have erred at this point, as Reinhold Niebuhr so clearly points out.[4] Conservative Christianity tends always to glorify its particular interpretation and to make of it a universal. An American Puritan in Boston thus vindicated his self-righteousness toward his fellow men with this statement: "What do Indians or Quakers or unregenerate persons matter when the glory of God is at

[3] From *The Return of the Native*. Book III, chap. ii.

[4] *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935), chap. 1.

stake?" But liberal Christians are equally guilty. They always tend to equate some relative good with the absolute good. The Levelers in England, the Quakers in Boston, the romantic optimists who with sincerity thought World War I was to make the world safe for democracy—these are all earnest but pathetic expressions of men who do not see that the instruments of justice inevitably become in the hands of sinful men instruments of injustice. Thus both conservative and liberal make of a relative good an absolute good. They do not adequately recognize the ambiguities of history, the complicated structure of society, and the conflicts within each personality.

SOME WAYS OF DETERMINING WHAT IS CHRISTIAN

1. Let us frankly recognize that in a society where there is much evil, there are many situations in which no easy choice between good and evil remains. Certainly this was true in Jesus' life. As he saw the gathering hatred and antagonism about him, led by professional religionists, he faced a choice. He did not want to die, this gallant young man in his early thirties with so much within him. "If it be possible," he said at Gethsemane, "let this cup pass from me." But between steadfastly setting his face towards Jerusalem to endure certain death, and running away from his supreme life dedication, there was no deviation. "No man taketh [my life] from me," he said, but "I lay it down of myself." These are the words of a brave man, having seen the worst, knowing there was no easy good choice, choosing that way least evil and most in keeping with God's character and purpose.

In the agonizing days of the war, there was no easy choice left for many between good and evil. For men in the armed forces who loved people, yet who were taught to kill, what easy choice was left? *There is no Christian way to fight a war.* But even in the necessity of destroying other men if we kept alive an ultimate good will toward our "enemies," if we recognized those international laws which exist in parts of the world assuring safety to neutrals and nonbelligerents, and if in ministering to the sick, the prisoners, the orphans, we practiced a few of what Wordsworth called "those little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love," then perhaps even in the conflict our conduct might have approximated that which is Christian.

2. God's will has been revealed to men most clearly through prayer and self-discipline. Though perfectionist groups have constantly gone to unwise extremes in the matter of denying to men the normal and wholesome pleasures of life, it may not be amiss, in light of the American habit of overeating, to remember and recognize the biblical emphasis on fasting as being both a sound and a creative element, if properly understood. We shall not know well the will of God by consulting the Gallup poll to see what other people are thinking on moral issues, so that we may know what we *ought* to think! Before every major decision in his life Jesus went "apart." Many of us can verify the value of this from our own experience. Major problems which caused us endless inner anguish became clear, not in discussion, but when, in a walk through the woods, in an afternoon alone by the seashore,

or in silence, the word of the unseen Friend became clear, and we went ahead with a sense of power.

3. We can test our judgment by the best social and spiritual experience of man. Napoleon's mother, when her son was at the zenith of his fortunes, was seen in her home in Corsica tucking away daily a few sous and francs. "But why do you bother to do this," asked a neighbor, "when your son has everything at his feet?" The wise mother answered, "He will want it when all this is over." [5]

Arnold Toynbee in his study of history tells us that out of twenty-one civilizations eighteen are gone, and all but two went down from inner decay. Jesus saw, because of the character of God, that the person as a child of God was the key to our human estimate of conduct.

The Renaissance discovered the individual in culture, while the Reformation discovered the individual in religion. But that discovery has often been exploited. Berdyaev could write: "In the capitalist's world freedom has been the privilege of a few and a doubtful privilege, even for them." In our own day we have seen fascism subordinate the person to society, while individualism has subordinated the community to the individual. Both are obviously wrong, for each opens the door to exploitation of one individual by another and to the frustration of personality.

The potential value of a disciplined group may be seen at this point. There is no omniscience in any technique. Ten undedicated people are not likely to be more Christian

[5] From Willard Sperry, *Rebuilding Our World* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943), p. 61.

in their collective judgment than one pagan. But to be a part of a group which is in earnest and is composed of people of prayer, who are honest in love, who are conversant with the best spiritual experiences of men of days other than our own, whose hearts are receptive to the leading of the Spirit—this may be one of the most thrilling creative cell groups in a community.

Christian conduct is that conduct, in light of all Christian history, which is most in keeping with the character of God whom we worship, and of the highest nature of his children with whom we live.

4. Any social program which claims to be Christian is begun in humility, not in arrogance. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley could be obstinate before men. But in reading their letters and diaries, one finds them prostrate before God. Neither Augustine in the city of Hippo in North Africa nor Walter Rauschenbusch in the Lower East Side of New York, claimed omniscience. The creative social prophets, whether Micah in Jerusalem or Washington Gladden in Columbus, do not sound like the Pharisee thanking God that they are not as other men. The place at which social action may be most redemptive is in the spirit of the publican who can honestly pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

5. God does not require or expect the same type of social response from every Christian. Nothing in the gospels is clearer than this standard. Jesus demands of one wealthy person, the rich young ruler, that he sell all and give to the poor. He does not make that demand of Matthew. Paul in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians

explicitly stresses the variety of ethical response in terms of vocation. Some of us grew up under the sincere but inadequate emphasis that only those who become ministers or missionaries fulfill the highest Christian service.

Emerson, from a secular viewpoint, had the squirrel say to the mountain:

> If I cannot carry forests on my back,
> Neither can you crack a nut.

The Christian counterpart is Paul's statement that whatever we do—whether we eat or we drink—we do it "unto the Lord."

In essence, what *is* Christian love? It is not sentimental, romantic love, although Jesus thoroughly included love of man and woman as a part of the ultimate love. It is not mutuality, loving those of "our crowd," "our type," "our fraternity," for, as Jesus said, even the legalistic Pharisees did that. Christian love is the love of God with all our mind, our heart, and our strength, and the loving of our neighbor as ourself. It has both the vertical and the horizontal dimension. What qualities are involved in this kind of love?

The first of them is humility. That is not a good word, but it means the absence of self-righteousness and self-importance. It means having an objective view of oneself. It means seeing oneself in all one's dependence for existence and achievement and welfare upon God. The second is sensitiveness—sensitiveness which goes beyond the obvious to the needs and feelings of others. The third is commitment—the commitment of self which will go the second and third mile,

which will swear to its own hurt and change not; which will pay the price of the cross. What we mean by Christian love is not any one thing. It involves all these graces, especially the last two; and it grows out of that unselfishness and that universalism which belong to the substructure of the Christian life.[6]

Because we love God in such complete and total terms, we shall love all men in these complete and total terms. Loving them is not necessarily liking them, although liking them is potentially possible. But loving them includes our willingness to pay the price of making available moral and spiritual opportunity equally for all men —this is the dynamic behind all missionary enterprise. It is an active desire that they shall have all physical and material needs—not wants—satisfied. "Whoso . . . beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (A.S.V.) Such love will work in behalf of economic and political freedom for all men, recognizing inequalities of talent, and just inequalities of economic and political reward—but inequalities *within limits*—realizing that the present inequalities in society are grossly more than necessary, hence the sub-Christian instability and insecurity of our present order. Such love includes the social opportunities of fellowship. It believes that people must be recognized as children of God, not perfect, which is sentimentalism, nor wholly imperfect, which is cynicism, but human beings.

[6] John C. Bennett, *Christianity—and Our World* (Hazen Books on Religion; New York: Association Press, 1936), p. 31. Used by permission.

It sees men as "a little lower than angels," but not angels —only *potential* angels.

A FEW AREAS OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

In a world which is a "theater of tensions," all areas of personal and corporate life cry out for the application of this love which does not let men go. To illustrate the principles mentioned previously, let us isolate three aspects of the human scene—admitting that they overlap—that we may see more clearly where we can begin to be instruments of peace.

1. The most personal aspect of life is that of individual relationships with other people. An objective professor of mine, much disturbed over the lack of application of Christ's ethic, was writing a lecture on the subject and decided to try out some of his ideas upon his long-suffering wife at the breakfast table—as professors are apt to do.

"My dear," said the scholar, "if you had your choice, with which type of husband should you prefer to live: one who was immoral, or one with a bad disposition?"

"You see," said his wife sweetly, "I wouldn't know. I've never lived with an immoral husband."

It is a disturbing fact that sinners are often congenial, while the righteous are frequently forbidding. Why the children of darkness attract and the children of light repel is a problem of more than superficial dimension.

Christian love in human relationships is much more than being cheerful at an "eight o'clock." It goes far beyond failing an examination without rancor, or losing

a campus election to a well-known inebriate. The word in the New Testament most expressive of the Christian attitude is the Greek *charis,* translated "grace." This quality is not necessary for salvation. But basically it so relates a person to God and to men that a fundamental respect, thoughtfulness, and consideration flowers in such winsome Christian virtues as gentleness, courtesy, poise, and generosity.

The New Testament speaks of giving a cup of cold water in the name of our highest Loyalty. It is demonstrated all about us by fathers and mothers, friends and neighbors, whose lives are so radiant, whose attitudes are so gracious that we are impelled toward goodness by their presence. It is more than good taste. It springs from a well of living water *inside* a person. Such a dedicated person, integrated by the spirit of Christ in full measure, has no thoughts or attitudes in which God is not present.

2. Economic and political action on the basis of the Christian ethic is terribly difficult and terribly important. It is difficult because of the complexity of a technological society, in which, despite our highest motives, none of us comes with clean hands or completely pure heart. Our real orthodoxies today are not theological but economic. The idea over which men will fight is not belief in a separated church for which reason Roger Williams was cast out of Boston. But the new inquisitions are held over the use or abuse of the common wealth of the people, as David Lilienthal learned before the iniquitous verbal attacks upon him by some members of the United States Senate.

The Brookings Institute Report, based upon assumptions favorable to the continuance of capitalism, reveals the degree of financial inequalities which existed in America in the favorable year of 1929. In that year only 36,000 families had an aggregate income equal to the aggregate income of 11,600,000 other families. Or, from another standpoint, one tenth of 1 per cent of the people had an income equal to that of 41 per cent of the population. When one realizes that in times of economic strain like the 1930's these discrepancies were much more severe than in the decade previous, and that disfranchised groups like the migrant workers, Negroes, and tenant farmers even in good times are relatively insecure, one is aware of the solemnity of this problem.[7]

Students with a Christian commitment may do at least four things toward a more tolerable religious community: First, they may work from the inside of all groups to which they belong, seeking by every means at their disposal to change the attitudes of people. Second, they must recognize and hold to the conviction that loyalty to God, if in conflict with any other loyalty, is always to remain supreme. This means that any national, economic, educational, or social loyalty for the Christian—even a family loyalty—is subservient to that complete commitment to the Christian cause. Third, campus politics can be cleaned up; student issues can be faced in terms of the truth which stands above the relativities of changing opinion. Fourth, we can share in large ventures simultaneously by allying ourselves with our responsible church boards in the areas

[7] See Bennett, p. 35.

of political and social change. We can support the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, with its mature experience in dealing with these very issues. We can ally ourselves with thoughtful organizations, Christian in spirit, which transcend parochialisms and represent a world-wide viewpoint. We can make the Christian Church increasingly the most potent instrument for the achievement of God's will.

3. Perhaps the most difficult single area of Christian social action is that involving tensions between racial groups. This problem originates at the same source as the two previous concerns. When the love of God and the love of fellow men are mature, the divisions among men —whether economic, political, or racial—tend to decrease. For Henry L. Mencken to speak of those beneath him economically as "yokels who sleep in their underclothes" is a violation of the Christian ethic, for he is raising, not lowering, the barriers between men.

At most points our partially Christian democracy stands above Marxism, and comparisons are not in its disfavor. But in the treatment of the race issue, Russia, at least in theory, has the better of us. Our problem is primarily volitional, not intellectual. Every student who has had a beginning course in anthropology knows there are no differences in capacities between racial groups. He also knows that there are practically no "pure" races left on earth. All of us are hybrid to some degree. One reading of Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* is enough to convince us of the academic stupidity of the white race's pre-

tending superiority over any other. In her later study [8] she reports that of all American soldiers examined during the recent war, Northern Negroes had a higher I.Q. as a group than Southern whites—obviously the result, not of racial superiority of either group, but of an explicit relationship between economic privilege and education in certain geographical areas. Yet the cleavages continue, and in some ways are quite as strong among college graduates as among unskilled laborers.

In light of the principles stressed earlier in the chapter, what can a Christian do? He can begin with all efforts possible to open economic opportunity in his community on the basis of ability rather than of racial backgrounds. He can work for political equality on the basis of status as citizen, and of willingness to pay taxes and to lay down life for one's country, rather than on the basis of racial backgrounds. He can—although this is least important in the minds of minority groups themselves—increasingly work for a growing social fellowship on the basis of worth as persons rather than of racial backgrounds. It is for lack of volition that our generation stands condemned.

I know of one community where a woman possessed of this Christian conscience in terms of race went quietly to work. Without publicity, and going against a great many years of lethargy in the community on the part of even the most enlightened, she gathered a little group of folk who were realists. They did not sentimentally hold large meetings and talk glibly of impossibilities. They got ten

[8] Benedict and Gene Wentfish, *The Races of Mankind* (New York: Penguin Books, 1943).

people each to lend the committee three hundred dollars to buy a piece of property without race-restrictive covenants. By a careful screening process the lots were sold to American citizens—some Anglo-American, some Mexican, some Negro—on the basis of character and co-operation, *not of racial backgrounds.* The community with little criticism approved the project. Seriously needed housing was provided. One area of race segregation was transcended. Supremely important, people were treated as people on the basis of a love of God and a love of neighbor.

WHAT ABOUT THE DISCOURAGEMENTS?

A college president whom I know says that the most important thing for a man to remember who has a major responsibility is that he is not God! In an imperfect world the most disheartening thing to see upon a campus is the idealism of real Christians, broken and beaten as it will be by a hostile, pagan society, and then ceasing to be effective.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," said the great realist Jesus. What God asks of us is not that we rectify all the problems of a sub-Christian society overnight. What he does ask is that the life of Jesus be our standard. He does ask that we be loyal to what is true, and willing to work and work again, and that we remain undiscouraged, even in the presence of powers and principalities which seem hostile to all things born of the Spirit.

And how can the example of Jesus guide us? He did not ask men to consult him about all of their personal problems. He did not even make his words rules among

his friends, for he made no effort to preserve them. But the *quality* of his revelation of God has become the standard for multitudes. It is not through any outward rule book that he has consciously or unconsciously guided our lives. He gives us no easy directions in a highly mechanistic age for a multitude of new and perplexing problems which we face. But the insistent quality of his own life, his emphasis upon truth, not because it was new, but because it was true—these are perennially the strongest guides for men in regulating conduct.

To be sure, we grow discouraged in trying to reach Jesus' high absolute of dedication. We find it impossible to be perfect "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"; we find that we hate, not love, our enemies; to be pure in heart and always to treat others as we should wish to be treated is often beyond us; to forgive seventy-times-seven times and to welcome the Samaritan of another race and color and social class is often uncongenial. Yet something in Christ keeps us trying. Having seen him and understood something of his spirit, we know that we can never be completely satisfied with a lower standard than his. And best of all, there is a God of grace and forgiveness, who understands our failures and our disappointments. Robert Browning, who so well understood the value of effort beyond failure, wrote:

> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God.[9]

[9] "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

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